

THE PROFICIENT DESIGNER:
The Path To Resonance
by Warren Feld, Designer



“Vestment”, Warren Feld, 2004, Miyuki cubes, seed beads and delicas, Austrian crystals, with 14KT, gold filled, sterling silver, and antiqued copper chain, clasps and other findings, lampwork bead by Lori Greenberg

Abstract:

Jewelry Designers want to be successful. But things can get a little muddled when thinking about how to get there. Our teachers, our friends, our colleagues often disagree on this point, and tell us to look for conflicting measures of success. We can often lose sight of what we want to end up with. The Proficient Jewelry Designer has but one guiding star: To achieve Resonance. Everything else is secondary. We achieve Resonance by gaining a comfort in and proficiency with communicating about design. This comfort, or disciplinary fluency, translates into all our composing, constructing and manipulating choices. This is empowering. Our pieces resonate. We achieve success. A rubric for proficiency self-assessment follows.

THE PROFICIENT DESIGNER:

The Path To Resonance

Jewelry Designers want to be successful.

But things can get a little muddled when thinking about how to get there. Where should they start? What should they learn first? What materials should they accumulate? What techniques should they start with? Should they focus on the process of designing jewelry? Or moreso on making jewelry? Or still yet, on achieving certain target measures, such as numbers of pieces made, or numbers of sales, or numbers of venues in which their jewelry is sold? Are there qualitative things which are important to accumulate, such as self-satisfaction or customer-satisfaction? Or style? Or recognition? Acceptance? Understanding?

Our teachers, our friends, our colleagues often disagree on how to get there, and tell us to look for, what turn out to be in effect, conflicting measures of success. We can often lose sight of what we want to end up with. We get a lot of contradictory advice. How should we organize our creative work and our time? How should we select materials and techniques? How do we know when our piece is finished? How should we anticipate our client's desires? How should we showcase our jewelry? How should we be judged and evaluated? We need to perform, we want to perform authentically, but how – how should we perform as a jewelry designer? The search for answers can be very frustrating, confusing, even demoralizing.

But it shouldn't be. Every jewelry designer should have but one guiding star – *Resonance*. If our jewelry does not have some degree of *resonance*, we keep working on it. If the process of creative exploration and design does not lead us in the direction of *resonance*, we change it. If the results we achieve – numbers of pieces made and numbers of pieces sold – is not synced tightly with *resonance*, we cannot call ourselves designers.

The Proficient Jewelry Designer specifies those goals about performance which will lead to one primary outcome: *To achieve Resonance*. Everything else is

secondary. Materials, techniques and technologies are selected with resonance in mind. Design elements are selected and applied with that idea of Resonance in mind. Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation are applied with that idea of Resonance in mind, with extra special attention paid to the Principle of Parsimony – knowing when enough is enough.

People may approach the performance tasks in varied ways. For some this means getting very detailed on pathways, activities, and objectives. For others, they let the process of design emerge and see where it takes them. Whatever approach they take in their creative process, for all designers, a focus on one outcome – Resonance – frees them up to think through design without encumbrance. It allows them to express meaning. It allows them to convey expressions in meaningful ways to others.

This singular focus on resonance becomes a framework within which to question everything and try to make sense of everything. Make sense of what the materials and techniques can allow them to do, and what they cannot. Make sense of what understandings other people – clients, sellers, buyers, students, colleagues, teachers – will bring to the situation, when exploring and evaluating their work. Make sense of why some things inspire you, and other things do not. Make sense of why you are a jewelry designer designing jewelry. Make sense of the fluency of your artistic expression, what works, how it works, why it works.

We achieve Resonance by gaining a comfort and ease in communicating about design. This comfort and ease, or disciplinary fluency, has to do with how we translate our inspirations and aspirations into all our compositional, constructive and manipulative choices. It is empowering. Our pieces resonate. We achieve success.

Resonance, communication, success, fluency – these are all words that stand in place for an intimacy between the designer and the materials, the designer and the techniques, the designer and inspiration. They reflect the designer's aspirations. They reflect the shared understandings of everyone the designer's jewelry is expected to touch. They reflect the designer's managerial prowess in bringing all these things together.

Resonance and disciplinary fluency result from a well-managed jewelry design process ^[3]. This process of creativity involves artist, audience and context. It is very interactional. Transactional. Integrative. Contingent.

For the artist, this process functions on several, coordinated levels, including...

1. Contemplation
2. Inspiration
3. Aspiration
4. Anticipation
5. Specification
6. Application
7. Fluency and Empowerment

CONTEMPLATION: An Intimacy with Materials and Techniques

Contemplation is a mystical theology.

Beads have a mystique to them. You stare at a bead, and, ask what it is. You put some thread on a needle, then the bead on the needle, and ask what to do. You stitch a few beads together, and wonder what will become of this. You create a necklace, and, ask how it will be worn. And you stare at each bead again, and, think where do all these feelings welling up within you come from – curiosity, beauty, peace and calm, reflection, satisfaction, magic, appeal, a sensuousness and sexuality. Your brain and eye enter into this fantastic dance, a fugue of focusing, refocusing, gauging and re-gauging light, color, shadow, a shadow's shadow, harmony, and discord.

You don't just bead and make jewelry. There's a lot involved here.

You have to buy (or fabricate) beads and findings and stringing materials, organize them, buy some extra parts, think about them, create with them, live with some failed creations, and go from there. If there wasn't something special about how our materials translate light into color, shade and shadow, then jewelry making would simply be work. But it's not.

You have to put one piece next to another...and then another. And when you put two beads next to each other, or one on top of the other, you're doing God's work. There's nothing as spectacular as painting and sculpting with light.

This bead before you -- why is it so enticing? Why do you beg it to let you be addicted? An object with a hole. How ridiculous its power. Some curving, some faceting, some coloration, some crevicing or texturing, some shadow, some bending of light. That's all it is. Yet you're drawn to it in a slap-silly sort of way.

When you arrange many beads, the excitement explodes geometrically within your being. Two beads together are so much more than one. Four beads so much more than two. A hundred beads so much more than twenty-five times four. The pleasure is uncontainable. You feel so powerful. Creative. You can make more of what you have than with what you started.

You need to select a method or strategy for arranging your beads. There are so many choices. Your organization should be appealing. It must enhance the power the bead has for you, then transcend as a power the bead has for others. It must be architecturally correct because this architecture determines the wear, drape and flow where the jewelry meets the person at the boundary between bead and body. And this architecture determines the structural integrity – how well the piece maintains shapes, forms and silhouettes.

And this assembling -- another gift. String through the hole, pull, tug, align, and string through the hole, pull, tug, align, and string through the hole, pull, tug, align, and string through the hole, pull, tug, align. So meditative. Calming. How could beads be so stress-relieving, other-worldly-visiting, and creative-exciting at the same time?

Contemplation. To contemplate the bead is to enter the deep reaches of your mind where emotion is one with geometry, and geometry is one with art, and art is one with physics, and beads are one with self.

Designing jewelry is an authentic performance task. This involves a profound intimacy with the materials (and techniques) the artist relies on. This intimacy means understanding how to select them, how to leverage their strengths and minimize their weaknesses, and how to manage their ability to enhance or impede resonance.

INSPIRATION: Becoming One with What Inspires You

Inspirations are sacred revelations you want to share through art and design.

The word inspiration comes from the Latin roots meaning “to breathe into.” But before you can breathe your inspiration into your jewelry, you need to become one with it.

There are these wonderfully exciting, sensually terrific, incredibly fulfilling things that you find as you try to imagine the jewelry you will create. They come from many sources: ideas, nature, images, people, behaviors. They might be realistic or abstract. They may be the particular color or pattern or texture or the way the light hits it and casts a shadow. They may be a need for order over chaos. They may be points of view. They may flow from some inner imagination.

For some reason, these inspirations take on a divine, sacred revelation for you – so meaningful that you want to incorporate them somehow into what you do. A fire in your soul. You want to translate these inspirations into colors, shapes, lines, patterns and textures. You want to impose an organization on them. You want to recapture their energy and power they have had over you. You feel compelled to bring these feelings into ideas, and these ideas into material objects.

There are many challenges to inspiration. That which we call “inspiring” can often be somewhat fuzzy. It might be a feeling. It might be a piece of an idea, or a small spot on an image. You might feel inspired, but, cannot put the What or the Why into words or images. On the surface, it may seem important to you, but unimportant to others. You the artist may not feel in control of the inspiration in that it seems like it is something that is evoked, not necessarily directed, by you.

When inspired, artists perceive new possibilities that transcend that which is ordinary around them. Too often, the artist feels passive in this process. This

transcendence does not feel like a willfully generated idea. However, it needs to be. The successful artist – one who eventually can achieve a level of resonance – is one who is not only inspired *by*, but also inspired *to*. This all requires a great deal of metacognitive self-awareness. The artist must be able to perceive the intrinsic value of the inspiring object, and how to extend this value in design, where the piece of jewelry becomes its expression.

Inspiration is motivating. Inspiration is not the source of creativity; creativity does not come from it. Inspiration, instead, should be viewed as a motivational response to creativity. It motivates the artist, through jewelry and its design, to connect this inspiration with others. It serves as a mediator between the self and the anticipated shared understandings of others. The jewelry encapsulates the artist's ability to make this connection. When the connection is well-made, resonance follows.

But finding inspirations is not only personal, but more importantly, it is an effort to influence others. It is an act of translating the emotions which resonate in you into some object of art which, in turn, will inspire and resonate with others. How does the inspiration occur to you, and how do you anticipate how this inspiration might occur to others?

Too often we lose sight of the importance of inspiration to the authentic performance task of creating jewelry. We operate with the belief that anyone can be inspired by anything. There's nothing more to it. Moreover, inspiration gets downplayed when put next to the discussion of the effort of making jewelry itself. But it should not. Inspiration is not less important than perspiration. It plays an equal role in the creative process. The artist's clarity about why something is inspiring, and why this inspiration motivates the artist to respond, will be critical for achieving success, that is resonance.

ASPIRATION: Translating Creativity into A Technical Product Design

Aspiration motivates the artist to actualize inspiration.

Aspiration is where the artist translates inspiration into an expressive design concept. The artist begins to control and regulate what happens next. This involves selecting Design Elements^[1] and clustering them to formulate meaningful expressions. The greater value the artist places on resonance, the stronger the aspiration will be to achieve it.

Aspiration is future-oriented. It requires a stick-to-it-ness. The artist must be sufficiently motivated to invest the time, energy and money into designing and making the jewelry that will not necessarily be finished, displayed or sold right away. It may require some additional learning and skills-development time. The artist may need to find a level of creativity within, and discover the kinds of skills, techniques and insights necessary for bringing this creativity to the aspired task at hand.

Aspiration requires the calculus: *Is it worth it?* It adds a level of risk to the project. It forces the artist to pay attention to the world around her or him. This world presents dynamic clues – what I discuss below as shared understandings – about opportunities, constraints, risks, contingencies, consequences, strategies and goals, and likely successes.

For some artists, motivation primarily is seen as *instinctual*. Think of *seat-of-the-pants*. Emergent, not controlled. A search for harmony, balance, rhythm, unity as something that feels right and looks right and seems right with the universe. Expressive, yes. Imaginative, yes. But not necessarily resonant.

Achieving resonance, however, is, for the most part, more than instinctual. It has some deliberate quality to it. It is communicative. It requires a purposeful act on the part of the artist. It is a different type of motivation -- *intentional*. The artist might want to convey a specific emotion. Or advocate for some change. Or illustrate a point of view. The artist may want to entertain or teach. Heal. Attract mates. Propagandize. Where a jewelry's design is not reflective of an artist's intent, there can be no resonance.

ANTICIPATION: Shared Understandings^[4]

Shared understandings dictate opportunities, contingencies and constraints.

The question of whether the audience correctly infers the presence of the artist's inspiration, and the sense of how the artist's hand comes into play within the design, remains. The answer revolves around a dynamic interaction between artist and audience, as they anticipate understandings they share, and ones they do not.

Shared understandings should be enduring, transferable, big ideas at the heart of what we think of as *good jewelry design*. These shared understandings are things which spark meaningful connections between designer and materials, designer and techniques, and designer and client. We need, however, to recognize that the idea of *understanding* is very multidimensional and complicated.

Understanding is not one achievement, but more the result of several loosely organized choices. Understanding is revealed through performance and evidence. Jewelry designers must perform effectively with knowledge, insight, wisdom and skill to convince us – the world at large and the client in particular -- that they really understand what design is all about. This involves a big interpersonal component where the artist introduces their jewelry to a wider audience and subjects it to psychological, social, cultural, and economic assessment.

Understanding is more than knowledge. The designer may be able to articulate what needs to be done to achieve something labeled *good jewelry design*, but, may not know how to apply it.

Understanding is more than interpretation. The designer may be able to explain how a piece was constructed and conformed to ideas about *good jewelry design*, but this does not necessarily account for the significance of the results.

Understanding is more than applying principles of construction. It is more than simply organizing a set of design elements into an arrangement. The designer must match knowledge and interpretation about *good jewelry design* to the context. Application is a context-dependent skill.

Understanding is more than perspective. The designer works within a myriad of expectations and points of view about good jewelry design. The designer must dispassionately anticipate these various perspectives about design, and, bring some constructed point of view and knowledge of implications to bear within the design and design process.

We do not design in a vacuum. The designer must have the ability to empathize with individuals and grasp their individual and group cultures. If selling their jewelry, the designer must have the ability to empathize with small and larger markets, as well. Empathy is not sympathy. Empathy is where we can feel what others feel, and see what others see.

Last, understanding is self-knowledge, as well. The designer should have the self-knowledge, wisdom and insights to know how their own patterns of thought may inform, as well as prejudice, their understandings of good jewelry design.

How the jewelry designer begins the process of creating a piece of jewelry is very revealing about the potential for success, and ultimately achieving a level of resonance. The designer should always begin the process by articulating the essential shared understandings against which their work will be evaluated and judged. For now, let's refer to this as *Backwards Design*^[5]. The designer starts with questions about assessment, and then allows this understanding to influence all other choices going forward.

Some *essential shared understandings* for good jewelry design, I would posit, might include the following:

- 1) Every designer has some creative ability, but may need to learn concepts and techniques and ways to apply them
- 2) Some understandings are universal and objective, particularly in reference to the selection, clustering and application of various Design Elements, such as color, shape, movement and dimension.
- 3) Other understandings are both objective and subjective. There is universal acceptance of what various organization and arrangement

schemes -- Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation – might be applied by the artist. However, how they are actually applied, and how satisfying that is to various audiences, is very personal and subjective.

- 4) The strengths and limitations of various materials. techniques or technologies should be respected, maximizing the strengths and minimizing the limitations
- 5) Jewelry should communicate and reflect the artist's intent
- 6) Jewelry should affirm the wearer's purpose and identity in context
- 7) Jewelry can only be considered as art, as it is worn
- 8) We know the jewelry is finished and successful when the choices made and the tradeoffs among appeal, function, and context are implemented to the point we see *parsimony* and *resonance*.

SPECIFICATION: Goal-Orientation

It's not just what you do...it's how you get there.

At this phase, the artist applies Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation^[2] for organizing and arranging things into a more complete whole with more elaborated expressions. Evidence of how these Principles are deliberately applied reflect the goal-orientation of the designer.

Jewelry designers are too quick to focus on the outcome, and too lax to focus on the process. It's always things like getting it done. Getting it to the client on deadline. Ending up with something concrete to show someone. Too much concentration on outcome can lead to taking shortcuts. Shortsightedness.

Inflexibility. A misunderstanding, perhaps illusion about, whether the piece is finished and successful.

Artists more appropriately should focus on goals. Artists who are focused on goals tend to embrace process. It's about all the smart choices regarding composition, construction and manipulation you made at each increment along the way. By specifying goals, the artist is encouraged to find connections, and be connected to and aware of shared understandings and their impact on perceived success. When problems arise, a goal-oriented focus allows the artist to be flexible and problem solve. The artist is present from contemplation to inspiration and through to aspiration, anticipation, specification and application. The goal-orientation prevents the artist from becoming lost or paralyzed with inaction.

The jewelry artist pursues several goals at once. The jewelry should be both appealing and functional. It should evoke emotion, elicit response, and resonate. The piece should show both unity and variety. The piece should create opinions, validate status, and reconfirm a situational, cultural or social identify. The piece should be reflective and communicative. It should be pleasurable to the maker, the wearer and the viewer alike.

When specifying goals, it is important to remember that not all goals are alike. The goals I am discussing here are the essential elements related to effective performance. That effective performance results in a finished and successful piece of jewelry reflective of the artist's hand and which resonates among a varied set of audiences.

The artist needs to set goals which clarify what results need to be accomplished by the time any piece of jewelry is finished and showcased. Goals provide perspective. They are there to prevent the artist from achieving anything less than resonance. These goals relate to generating deep understandings and competence at performance. They are very integrated with Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation. They are not results-specific per se; they are organizing and overarching. They serve as sign-posts to point to and highlight what jewelry designers need to engage with when thinking through and implementing expressions within design.

The jewelry designer specifies goals as standards of professional performance, such as...

- Leveraging the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses of desired materials and techniques
- Discussing and reflecting upon inspirations and motivations toward the expression of the creative self
- Defining aspirational intent, point of view, and what it means to connect to various audiences
- Delineating shared understandings among self, wearer, viewer, student, master, buyer and seller, in relationship to how the jewelry will be observed and assessed and worn within a context
- Elaborating on all artistic and architectural elements and principles which should come into play, and why
- Reflecting on personal learning throughout the process, particularly as it relates to developing and expanding on skills related to fluency in design
- Determining how skills, insights and lessons learned from the current project might be transferred to your next one

Within each generalized performance goal, the designer can further identify particular tasks, knowledges and skills required in order to accomplish them. Often, with too many choices about what to do, what to include, and how to proceed, priorities and timeframes will need to be set, as well.

Resonance is more easily achieved when the designer approaches design as a process, an understanding of the myriad sets and levels of choices as made within a coherent system of creative thinking and activity, and with clear performance goals to guide the way. Well-defined goals and the smart application of Principles results in more authentic performance, thus showing the artist's intent and hand.

APPLICATION: Unity, Emotions, Resonance

Think like an assessor^[6]...find evidence related to desired results.

What is the evidence we need to know for determining when a piece is finished and successful? What clear and appropriate criteria specify what we should look at? What clues has the artist provided to let the various audiences become aware of the authenticity on the performance?

There are different opinions in craft, art and design about what are the most revealing and important aspects of the work, and which every authentic jewelry design performance must meet.

The traditional criteria used in the art world are that the designer should achieve *unity, variety* and *evoke emotions*. These, I feel, may work well when applied to paintings or sculpture, but they are insufficient measures of success when applied to jewelry. Jewelry involves the creation of objects where both artistic appeal as well as practical considerations of use are essential. The artistry of jewelry cannot be distinguished from that jewelry as it is worn, and the context within which it is worn. So, when referencing any jewelry's design, I prefer to use criteria of *parsimony* and *resonance*, instead. We know when a piece is finished and successful when the choices of the artist are deemed parsimonious, and the various audiences perceive the piece to resonate.

Parsimony vs. Unity/Variety

In art, the traditional measure of completion and success is a feeling or sense of "*Unity*." *Unity* signifies how everything feels all right. All the Design Elements used, and how they were coordinated and placed, are very coherent, clear, balanced, harmonious and satisfying. I think the idea of *unity* begins to get at the place we want to end up. But this concept is not concrete enough for me.

What bothers me the most is that you can have unity, but the piece still be seen as boring when there is no *variety*. Criteria provided from the art perspective recognize this. But somehow tempering unity with variety starts to add some ambiguity to our measurements of finish and success. This ambiguity is unacceptable as a principled outcome of jewelry construction.

Another concern I have, is that you can have unity with variety, but, from the art perspective, these assessments rely too much on universal, objective perceptions of design elements and their attributes (*for example, the use of color schemes*). Resonance is not about picking the correct color scheme. It is more about how that color scheme is used, manipulated, leveraged or violated within the piece. We must not leave the artist, the wearer, and the situation out of the equation. We must not minimize the artist's hand – the artist's intent, thinking, strategizing, arranging, pushing the boundaries, even violating the universal, objective rules.

Jewelry creation usually demands a series of judgment calls and tradeoffs. Tradeoffs between aesthetics and functionality. Tradeoffs between artist goals and audience understandings and expectations. Tradeoffs between a full palette of colors-shapes-textures and a very limited one. Any measure of completeness and success needs to result from the forced choice decisions of the artist. It needs to account for the *significance* of the results, not just the *organization* of them. It needs to explain the *Why*, not just the *What*.

For me, the more appropriate concept here is *Parsimony*. Parsimony is when you know enough is enough. When the finished and successful piece is parsimonious, the relationship of all the Design Elements and their expressed attributes will be so strong, that to add or remove any one thing would diminish, not just the design, but rather the significance of the design.

Parsimony is sometimes referred to in art and design as *Economy*, but the idea of economy is reserved for the visual effects. The designer needs to be able to decide when enough is enough. For jewelry designers, we want that economy or parsimony to apply to functional and situational effects, as well.

Parsimony...

- forces explanation; its forced-choice nature is most revealing about the artist's understandings and intentions

- relies on evidence more so than assumptions to get at criticality

- focuses examination of the few elements that make a difference

Resonance vs. Evoking Emotions

Finished and successful jewelry should not only evoke emotions, but, should resonate.

Achieving Resonance is the guiding star for jewelry designers, at each step of the way.

Resonance is some level of felt energy that is a little more than an emotional response. The difference between saying that piece of jewelry is “beautiful” vs. saying that piece of jewelry “makes me want to wear it”. Or that “I want to touch it”. Or “My friends need to see this.”

Resonance is something more than emotion. It is some kind of additional energy we see, feel and otherwise experience. Emotion is very reactive. Resonance is intuitive, involving, identifying. *Resonance* is an empathetic response where artist and audience realize a shared (or contradictory) understanding without losing sight of whose views and feelings belong to whom.

Resonance results from how the artist controls light, shadow, and their characteristics of warmth and cold, receding and approaching, bright and dull, light and dark. *Resonance* results from how the artist leverages the strengths of materials and techniques and minimizes their weaknesses. *Resonance* results from social, cultural and situational cues. *Resonance* results from how the artist takes us to the edge of universal, objective understandings, and pushes us every so slightly, but not too, too far, beyond that edge.

<i>Jewelry which resonates...</i>	
- is communicative and authentic	- lets the materials and techniques speak
- shows the artist’s hand as intention, not instinct	- anticipates shared understandings of many different audiences about design elements and principles, and some obvious inclusion, exclusion or intentional violation of them
- evokes both an emotional as well as energetic response from wearer and viewer	- results from a design process that appears to have been more systemic (e.g., ingrained
- shows both degrees of control, as well as	

<p><i>moments of the unexpected</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>makes something noteworthy from something ordinary</i> - <i>finds the whole greater than the sum of the parts</i> 	<p><i>within an integrated process) than systematic (e.g., a step-by-step approach)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>both appeals and functions at the boundary where jewelry meets person</i>
---	--

Resonance functions on several levels during the design process.

Phase of Design Process	How Resonance Comes Into Play
<p>1. Contemplation <i>Exhibiting an intimacy with the materials and techniques</i></p>	Shows understanding how to leverage the strengths and minimize the weaknesses in all materials and techniques used
<p>2. Inspiration <i>Sharing sacred revelations through art and design</i></p>	Piece motivates someone to be as inspired as the designer was; the designer inspires <i>to</i> , not inspired <i>by</i>
<p>3. Aspiration <i>Actualizing inspiration into a design</i></p>	The jewelry's concept and design clearly translates the designer's inspiration into that design
<p>4. Anticipation <i>Awareness of shared understandings and the opportunities, contingencies and constraints they will allow</i></p>	The Design Element choices provide evidence that the designer is aware of shared understandings among various audiences which will be used to evaluate and judge the piece.
<p>5. Specification <i>Clarifying what results need to be accomplished</i></p>	Evidence of how Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation are applied and the degree the piece feels like it resulted from a authentic performance by the designer.
<p>6. Application <i>Strategically and parsimoniously applying Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation to establish evidence related to desired results</i></p>	Evidence why piece feels unified, parsimonious, and resonant, and why piece is worth the thought, time, and effort put into it
<p>7. Fluency and Empowerment</p>	The designer has a comfort about communicating design thinking and intent, by relating choices of

Managing design process and demonstrating disciplinary literacy

evidence to how finished the piece is, and how successful (resonant) it is.

FLUENCY^[7] AND EMPOWERMENT: Managing Choices In Expression

Empowerment is about successfully making choices. These are choices about expressing one's intent through art and design.

These choices could be as simple as whether to follow through on some inspiration. They might involve selection of elements of design, or principled arrangements of beads, forms and components. The designer will make choices about how to draw someone's attention to the piece, or, present the piece to a larger audience. The designer will make choices between aesthetics and functionality. She or he may decide to submit the piece to a magazine or contest. She or he may want to sell the piece and market it. The designer will make choices about how a piece might be worn, or who might wear it, or when it might be worn, in what context.

The fluent designer will be adept at making these choices. The better designer is able to bring a high level of coherence and consistency to the process of managing all this – intent, shared understandings, knowledge and skills, evaluative review, and reflection and adjustment. This is called "*fluency in design*".

Fluency is the ability of the designer to select and connect Design Elements smoothly, in visually and functionally and situationally appropriate ways with understanding. The idea of understanding is broadly defined, to include the artist's personal goals for expression, as well as the expectations of all the audiences – the wearer, the viewer, the buyer, the seller, the student, the master. The better designer achieves a level of disciplinary literacy where fluency becomes automatic, accurate, and rapidly applied.

The better, more fluent jewelry designer is able to anticipate how others will come to understand these mechanisms and the implications for applying them in one way or another. For example, the better and more fluent designer would be able to select and combine design elements to appropriately differentiate jewelry that would best be worn at work, and jewelry that would best be worn, say, when someone was going to a night club for dancing and socializing.

Lastly, fluency means that the designer has also been taught to look for, anticipate and incorporate context clues. Design does not occur in a vacuum. It has implications which become realized in a context. That context might be historical, personal, cultural or situational.

More proficient, fluent jewelry designers will be comfortable and somewhat intentional and fluid in their abilities to...

- 1. Leverage strengths and minimize weaknesses of materials and techniques.*
- 2. Decode, select, cluster and apply Design Elements, and implement and apply various organizational arrangements related to Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation.*
- 3. Work within shared understandings about jewelry and its successful design.*
- 4. Apply key knowledge and skills to achieve the desired result.*
- 5. Anticipate how their work will be reviewed, judged and evaluated by criteria reflective of these same shared understandings.*
- 6. Communicate their intent.*
- 7. Step back, reflect, and validate all their thinking to reject any misunderstandings, and make adjustments accordingly.*

RUBRIC^[8] AS THINKING ROUTINE

Designers need a simple map to all these ideas about literacy and fluency – something they can easily review and determine where their strengths and weaknesses are as they gain proficiency and fluency in design. One type of map is a *rubric*.

A rubric is a table of criteria used to rate and rank understanding and performance. A rubric answers the question by what criteria performance should be judged. The rubric provides insightful clues for the kinds of evidence we need to make such assessments. The rubric helps us distinguish degrees of performance, from the sophisticated to the naïve. The rubric encapsulates what an authentic jewelry design performance would look like.

Such a rubric is presented below for the artist to use as a *thinking routine*.^[9] Here I have used one rubric to represent both (1) understanding and (2) performance, but, I could have easily created two separate rubrics toward this end. In this rubric table below, the rows represent contemplation, inspiration, aspiration, anticipation, specification, application, and fluency and empowerment. The columns represent the degrees of understanding and performance along a continuum, from *proficient* on one end to *not there yet* on the other. By way of example, I use the rubric to assess my performance with a piece I created called *Vestment* (Feld, 2004).

RUBRIC: How Proficient Am I In Achieving Resonance?

The Rubric...

UNDERSTANDING & PERFORMANCE	4- Proficient <i>Insightful, intuitive understanding, effectively established, with clear intent, and well supported by details</i>	3-Capable <i>Well-considered understanding, appropriately established and supported by details</i>	2-Shows Potential <i>Some plausible understanding, some consistency established and supported by details, but not always sustained</i>	1-Not There Yet <i>Superficial or no understanding, not consistent or sustained, perhaps vague or incomplete</i>
CONTEMPLATION <i>Exhibiting an intimacy with the materials, techniques, and technology</i>	Purposeful in selection of materials and techniques which synergistically work together Insightful understanding and clear ability to leverage strengths and minimize weaknesses of materials and techniques	Selects materials appropriate for technique used, and select technique appropriate for task at hand Some ability to leverage strengths and minimize weaknesses of materials and techniques	Selects materials and techniques which may have some fit with the task at hand, but could not articulate the reasons why Has limited understanding of the strengths and weaknesses materials and techniques bring to the task at hand	Does not understand the relationship between the selection of materials and techniques and the task at hand Has no understanding of the strengths and weaknesses materials and technique
INSPIRATION <i>Sharing sacred revelations through art and design</i>	Clearly recognizes intrinsic value between inspiration and the design of finished piece; applies inspiration Deliberately reflects on using inspiration and the design of the piece to motivate and energize others to so be inspired	Some recognition of the connection between inspiration and the design of finished piece; applies inspiration Thinks how others might be inspired by and emotionally connected to the piece as well	Passively responds to inspiring objects while designing piece with some intent to evoke a personal emotion but limited intent to evoke that emotion in others; consumes inspiration Does not think deeply about how the piece might inspire others	Either does not begin with an inspiration, or only a weak connection between an inspiring object and the design of a piece Does not think about how the piece might inspire others
ASPIRATION <i>Actualizing inspiration</i>	Can clearly and intentionally	Can, with some clarity, translate a feeling or idea into	Can translate a feeling or idea into a jewelry design or	A jewelry design emerges somehow, but

THE PROFICIENT DESIGNER: The Path To Resonance
by Warren Feld

<p><i>into a design</i></p>	<p>translate a feeling or idea into a jewelry design or model; With considerable intention and control, select and arrange Design Elements, resulting in an inspiring design which resonates</p> <p>Can clearly determine risk-calculus comparing all costs associated with constructing piece relative to all benefits from how the finished piece will be received</p>	<p>a jewelry design or model, and select Design Elements which come together well and evokes emotion</p> <p>Has an intuitive feel for the risk-calculus, comparing all costs associated with constructing piece relative to all benefits from how the finished piece will be received</p>	<p>model, but mostly based on instinct rather than intent; can select Design Elements which results in a satisfying design</p> <p>Has not taken the time to think about the risk-calculus for implementing a design</p>	<p>there is little obvious connection to an inspiration or an artist's intention</p> <p>Does not know how to think about the risk-calculus for implementing a design</p>
<p>ANTICIPATION <i>Awareness of shared understandings and the opportunities, contingencies and constraints they will allow</i></p>	<p>Shows empathy; can anticipate others' points of view, and how to incorporate them with his/her own</p> <p>Can engage with others around this project</p> <p>Can specify shared understandings of various audiences, and how they may predetermine opportunities, contingencies and constraints</p> <p>Can delineate misunderstandings</p>	<p>Can explain how a piece and its construction conforms to others' ideas of good jewelry design, and shows some evidence in applying this</p> <p>Anticipates some shared understandings, but is somewhat reactive to them</p>	<p>Can explain, in an academic sense, how a piece fits broad understandings about good design, but is weak in applying this</p> <p>Is weak, in reality, at anticipating others' shared understandings about design and is very reactive to them</p>	<p>Cannot explain or apply understandings of how a piece fits a definition of good design</p> <p>Does not anticipate others' shared understandings about design, nor responds to them in any significant way</p>

THE PROFICIENT DESIGNER: The Path To Resonance
by Warren Feld

SPECIFICATION <i>Clarifying what results need to be accomplished, and the performances involved</i>	<p>Can clearly define and articulate those performance goals necessary to achieve resonance, particularly those related to Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation</p> <p>Can implement a coherent process and system of creative thinking and activity as a series of smart choices leading up to the finished product</p> <p>Can make visible the consequences of his/her design process choices</p> <p>Can identify what it will take to overcome misunderstandings, and flexibly problem solve, when necessary</p>	<p>Can define some performance goals necessary to achieve resonance, particularly those related to Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation</p> <p>Can implement an organized process of creative production</p> <p>Can identify some consequences related to his/her design process choices</p> <p>Can identify misunderstandings and determine some strategies in response, when necessary</p>	<p>Does not overtly define performance goals necessary to achieve resonance; however, may have an intuitive sense of some performance goals which need to occur, particularly those associated with Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation</p> <p>Does not work within an organized process of creative production</p> <p>Does not identify consequences related to his/her design process choices</p> <p>Does not identify misunderstandings, nor develop strategies for overcoming these when they occur</p>	<p>Is not yet performance goal-oriented.</p> <p>Does not understand how to define or work within an organized process of creative production</p> <p>Cannot identify consequences related to his/her design process choices</p> <p>Does not recognize, or incorporate shared understandings or misunderstandings into the creative process</p>
APPLICATION <i>Strategically and parsimoniously applying Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation to establish evidence related to desired results</i>	<p>Provides in-depth, coherent, insightful, recognizable and credible reasons, based on evidence and both art and design theory, for all design choices, particularly tradeoffs among aesthetics, function and context</p> <p>Argues what is central to piece that makes it</p>	<p>Provides coherent, insightful reasons based on evidence in art theory for most design choices</p> <p>Weak or no tradeoffs among aesthetics, function and context.</p>	<p>Provides justifications for some design choices, but not grounded in art or design theory and perspective</p> <p>Does not make any accommodations among aesthetics, function and context</p>	<p>Does not recognize the design process as a series of choices, or in any way rooted in art or design theory and perspective</p> <p>Does not understand that tradeoffs may need to get made among aesthetics,</p>

THE PROFICIENT DESIGNER: The Path To Resonance
by Warren Feld

	<p>work; emphasizes application in context</p> <p>Uses materials, techniques, design elements and principles in an especially novel way</p> <p>Determines confidently that piece is finished and successful, that is parsimonious and resonant</p> <p>Justifies why finished piece is worth the thought, time, and effort put into it.</p>	<p>Uses materials, techniques, design elements and principles in novel way</p> <p>Judges based on personal and art theory assumptions when piece is finished and successful, that is unified with some variety, and evokes emotions</p> <p>Some explanation as to why finished piece is worth the thought, time, and effort put into it.</p>	<p>Uses materials, techniques, design elements and principles in interesting or generally appealing way</p> <p>The piece is finished when the artist stops working on it; no judgements related to success</p> <p>No coherent explanation as to why finished piece is worth the thought, time, and effort put into it.</p>	<p>function and context</p> <p>Does not show significant understanding about materials, techniques, design elements, principles, and how to choose, cluster them</p> <p>Shows no confidence in determining whether piece is finished or successful.</p> <p>Assumes work done is worth thought, time, and effort put into it.</p>
<p>EMPOWERMENT <i>Managing design process and demonstrating disciplinary literacy</i></p>	<p>Intuitive; metacognitive; can make choices based on intent, and anticipate implications of choices; can take a critical stance; can recognize personal and situational biases</p> <p>Effective and appearing almost effortless decoding Design Elements and applying Principles of Composition, Construction, and Manipulation; has complete and extensive knowledge about Elements and Principles and their application in context</p>	<p>Somewhat intuitive; can articulate some of the intentional choices and their implications made in design process; may not be fully aware of personal and situational biases</p> <p>Understands what is required for decoding Design Elements and applying Principles of Composition, Construction, and Manipulation, but does this with some effort and some varying</p>	<p>Weak demonstration of process management; typically following step-by-step process outline or instructions where most choices have been made for the artist; unaware of implications of choices</p> <p>Doing some decoding of Design Elements and some applying of Principles, but with some difficulties or misconceptions; may have considerable but not</p>	<p>No demonstration of process management; requires others to delineate the necessary design and implementation choices; unaware that there are implications for any choice</p> <p>Noticeable difficulties (or unable to do) decoding Design Elements and applying Principles; generally unfamiliar with full range of Elements and Principles</p>

THE PROFICIENT DESIGNER: The Path To Resonance
by Warren Feld

	Can relate choices of evidence to how finished the piece is, and how successful (resonant) it is	<p>degrees of effectiveness; has extensive knowledge of Elements and Principles</p> <p>Can point to some evidence to how finished the piece is, and how successful (resonant) it is</p>	<p>full knowledge of Elements and Principles</p> <p>Can relate choices and evidence to how finished the piece is, and how successful (resonant) it is</p>	Does not recognize the relationships among choice, evidence, and results
--	--	---	---	--

RUBRIC: How Proficient Am I In Achieving Resonance?

The piece...



“Vestment”, by Warren Feld, 2008

I was contracted to do a series of workshops on Contemporizing Etruscan Jewelry. “Vestment” was one of the pieces I created as a contemporized version of a traditional Etruscan collar. *Contemporized* refers to drawing inspiration from a traditional piece, not reviving or imitating it per se.

With my contemporized version of this Etruscan Collar, I've used bead weaving techniques (Ndebele stitch and Petersburg chain stitch) to get



Detail 1



Detail 2



Traditional Etruscan Collar

If I were using the Rubric above to evaluate my conception, design and implementation of this piece – Vestment – I would be thinking about the following...

CONTEMPLATION Score 4
Exhibiting an intimacy with the materials, techniques, and technology

The Ndebele stitch allows a fluidity and draping while still maintaining the basic shape. Using two small beads and a cube to make the Ndebele stitch, rather than the traditional four small beads to complete the stitch, adds resonance. Creating two overlapping layers of stitching creates unusual color/shadow effects while the piece is worn.

INSPIRATION Score 4
Sharing sacred revelations through art and design

This piece draws inspiration from form, cultural color preferences, yet results in a very contemporary piece with more fluidity, dimensionality, movement, and sensual appeal.

ASPIRATION Score 4
Actualizing inspiration into a design

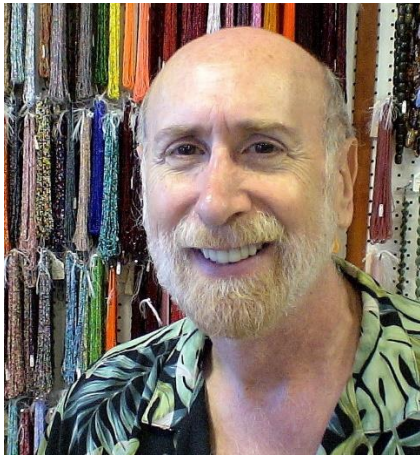
<p>a more dimensional effect, stronger color play, and a more contemporary sense of fashion and wearability.</p> <p>The piece shown uses Miyuki cubes, seed beads and delicas, Austrian crystals, with 14KT, gold filled, sterling silver, and antiqued copper chain, clasps and other findings. With some pieces, I include artist-created handmade lampwork beads made by Lori Greenberg.</p> <p>My Etruscan VESTMENT is worn like a scarf. It is meant to present a different jewelry profile than a typical necklace. It is at once formal and relaxed, complementing the body and fashion, rather than competing with it. The Vestment fastens in the front.</p> <p>The main strips of the vestment are created using a double-layered, Ndebele stitch. These strips are attached to the clasp with an</p>		<p><i>The design shows considerable intent and forethought in bringing together color, materials, techniques, forms, in a coherent arrangement.</i></p> <p>ANTICIPATION Score 3 <i>Awareness of shared understandings and the opportunities, contingencies and constraints they will allow</i></p> <p><i>The piece is generally well-received, with some questions about how and when it is to be worn, and whether it is sufficiently contemporary in design.</i></p> <p>SPECIFICATION Score 3 <i>Clarifying what results need to be accomplished, and the performances involved</i></p> <p><i>At the time I created this design, my process was generally organized but with considerable trial and error. Tried to get result of appealing piece, had difficulty making tradeoffs between aesthetics and functionality. Did not have a clear understanding of resonance.</i></p>
---	--	---

<p>assemblage of pieces created using the Petersburg chain stitch.</p>		<p>APPLICATION Score 3 <i>Strategically and parsimoniously applying Principles of Composition, Construction and Manipulation to establish evidence related to desired results</i></p> <p><i>Was primarily driven by art theory, with more last minute choices about functionality. Otherwise, made strategic choices in selecting materials, construction techniques, and meeting most contemporary expectations.</i></p> <p>EMPOWERMENT Score 3 <i>Managing design process and demonstrating disciplinary literacy</i></p> <p><i>Was not fluent in design at this point in time. Most of my great strategic choices were more intuitive than intentional.</i></p>
--	--	--

WARREN FELD, Jewelry Designer

warren@warrenfeldjewelry.com

615-292-0610



For Warren Feld, Jewelry Designer, (www.warrenfeldjewelry.com), beading and jewelry making have been wonderful adventures. These adventures have taken Warren from the basics of bead stringing and bead weaving, to wire working and silver smithing, and onward to more complex jewelry designs which build on the strengths of a full range of technical skills and experiences.

Warren leads a group of instructors at Be Dazzled Beads (www.bedazzledbeads.com). He teaches many of the bead-weaving, bead-stringing, jewelry design and business-oriented courses. He works with people just getting started with beading and jewelry making, as well as those with more experience.

His pieces have appeared in beading and jewelry magazines and books. One piece is in the Swarovski museum in Innsbruck, Austria.

He is probably best known for creating the international The Ugly Necklace Contest, where good jewelry designers attempt to overcome our pre-wired brains' fear response for resisting anything Ugly.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Feld, Warren. "Jewelry Design Composition: Playing with Building Blocks Called Design Elements," 3/17/2018

[2] Feld, Warren. "Jewelry Design Principles: Composing, Constructing, Manipulating," 4/25/2018

[3] Feld, Warren. "Jewelry Design: A Managed Process," Klimt02, 2/2/18.
<https://klimt02.net/forum/articles/jewelry-design-managed-process-warren-feld>

[4] *Shared Understandings*. In another graduate education class, the major text reviewed the differences between understanding and knowledge. The question was how to teach understanding. Worth the read to gain many insights about how to structure teaching to get sufficient understanding to enrich learning. ***Understanding by Design*** by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, 2nd Edition, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005.

[5] *Backwards Design*. One of the big take-aways from ***Understanding by Design*** (see footnote 3) was the idea they introduced of "backwards design". Their point is that you can better teach understanding if you anticipate the evidence others will use in their assessments of what you are trying to do. When coupled with ideas about teaching literacy and fluency (see footnote 2), you can begin to introduce ideas about managing the design process in a coherent and alignable way.

[6] ***Understanding by Design*** by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, 2nd Edition, p. 146, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005.

[7] *Fluency*. I took two graduate education courses in Literacy. The primary text we used was ***Literacy: Helping Students Construct Meaning*** by J. David Cooper, M. Robinson, J.A. Slansky and N. Kiger, 9th Edition, Cengage Learning, 2015. Even though the text was not about jewelry designing per se, it provides an excellent framework for understanding what fluency is all about, and how fluency with language develops over a period of years. I have relied on many of the ideas in the text to develop my own ideas about a disciplinary literacy for jewelry design.

[8] Rubrics. **Understanding by Design** by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, 2nd Edition, p. 146, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005.

[9] *Thinking Routines*. I teach jewelry design. I find it useful to engage students with various ways of thinking out loud. They need to hear me think out loud about what choices I am making and what things I am considering when making those choices. They need to hear themselves think out loud so that they can develop strategies for getting more organized and strategic in dealing with information and making decisions. My inspiration here was based on the work done by *Visible Thinking* by [Project Zero](#) at Harvard Graduate School of Education .